

BOOKS FOR THE TIMES

No. 1

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A Study of  
Four Outstanding Books of  
Christian Apologetics

by

I. J. SEMPER

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1928



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## INTRODUCTION

The four books which are studied in this pamphlet, while widely differing in aim and subject-matter, have a common apologetic basis. Each book is a defence of some phase of Catholicism. Cardinal Newman traces the great anti-Catholic tradition back to its sources, and subjects it to the scrutiny of his keen logic and his good-natured sarcasm. G. K. Chesterton gives reasons for his faith in the Apostles's Creed, a creed which he accepts on the authority of the Catholic Church. Hilaire Belloc defends the historic Church of the ages with the weapons of a historian, and his book is the best presentation of the philosophy of history from the Catholic viewpoint. Robert Louis Stevenson, a non-Catholic, in his defence of the saintly Father Damien, unwittingly pays a beautiful tribute to that fair garden whose seed is the blood of the martyrs. This little study is issued in the hope that it may lead to a widespread reading knowledge of four masterpieces of Christian apologetics, which have every right to be styled good books for the times.

1928-29 L.R.

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## THE GREAT ANTI-CATHOLIC TRADITION

("Present Position of Catholics in England" by Cardinal Newman.  
Longmans, Green and Company, New York.)

In our day when ignorance and bigotry are once more rearing their ugly heads, no book could be more timely or could be read with greater profit by Catholics than Cardinal Newman's "Present Position of Catholics in England." This book comprises a series of lectures which Newman delivered to lay people in Birmingham, England, in the year 1851. To understand the book we must remember that the year 1850 witnessed what is called the "Papal Aggression" excitement. It was in that year that the Roman Catholic hierarchy was re-established in England, with Wiseman as the Cardinal-Archbishop of Westminster. Historians tell us that the papal document which announced the division of England into Roman Catholic sees, threw the entire English nation into a wild frenzy of excitement. The benighted Englishmen of those days thought that the Pope was laying territorial claim to England and that Cardinal Wiseman was coming from Rome to take possession of London. The newspapers retailed all varieties of gross calumnies and extravagant slanders. There were mock processions to burn the Pope in effigy and mass-meetings addressed by bigots and renegades. The Pope was denounced in Parliament, and at a great public banquet the first judge of the land spoke of trampling Cardinal Wiseman's hat under foot. Catholics everywhere were mocked, insulted, and stoned in the streets.

It was then that Newman, greatest of all champions of the Faith in modern times, stepped into the breach. In lecture after lecture he protested against the ignorant and prejudiced emotionalism of the traditional English attitude towards the Catholic Church. He delivered these lectures practically in the teeth of a raging mob, and, when he had done, bigotry hadn't a leg to stand on. Newman adapted himself to his hearers,

*Newman's Book  
Makes a  
Popular Appeal*

and to the occasion, and, as a result, his book is a popular book in the sense that it is easy to read. It is for this reason that critics advise people who have never read anything by Newman to begin with this work. The book reveals Newman as a defender of the Faith, whose weapons of attack are as numerous as they are deadly. And yet there is nothing bitter or narrow or petty about the book. Augustine Birrell, a great non-Catholic critic, says of it: "The whole book is one of the best humored books in the English language."

When we recall that Cardinal Newman was a convert, the significance of his book becomes plain. He was born in 1801

*Newman Speaks  
With Authority*

and died in 1890. His life therefore practically spans the whole of the nineteenth century. Before he joined the Church, he was the leader of the Oxford Movement, the greatest preacher

of his day, the most prominent and influential clergyman in the Anglican communion. In 1843 he entered the Catholic Church, and his career thus falls into two almost equal divisions. He spent one-half of his life as a Protestant and the other half as a Catholic. As a controversialist, therefore, he speaks with authority and he gives testimony from the inside. Newman knew both sides, "having," as he himself tells us, "once been a Protestant, and being now a Catholic—knowing what is said and thought of Catholics, on the one hand, and, on the other, knowing what they really are." He knew both sides, and his epitaph written by himself summarizes the judgment which he pronounced not only in words but in acts: *Ex umbris et imaginibus in veritatem*—"Coming out of the shadows into realities."

Newman begins his book with the old fable of the Man who once invited a Lion to be his guest. All the paintings and

*The Fable of the  
Man and the Lion*

statuary in the Man's palace represented struggles between men and lions, and, strange to say, in every painting and in every group of statuary the men were always the victors and the lions

were always the vanquished. The comment of the Lion was:



"Lions would have fared better, had lions been artists." The moral is that every question has two sides, and that if a person has heard but one of them, he will think that nothing can be said on the other. For the last three hundred years the Catholic Church has been represented by a great and continuous anti-Catholic tradition as being always worsted in her battles with her foes, "ever dying, ever dead; and the only wonder is that she has to be killed so often—in order thoroughly, and once for all, and for the last time, and for ever and ever, to annihilate her once more." Newman bids his readers ponder how the British Constitution, which he lauds as one of the greatest of human works, would fare in the hands of people who had been taught from time immemorial to look upon it as a piece of unmitigated evil. He imagines a propagandist trying to spread John-Bullism in darkest Russia, and he paints an amusing picture of ignorant and prejudiced Russians indignantly protesting against the supposed iniquities of the British Constitution. Newman draws upon his imagination for this parallel, and yet he asserts that he is not using caricature. "No conceivable absurdities can surpass the absurdities which are firmly believed of Catholics by sensible, kind-hearted, well-intentioned Protestants. Such is the consequence of having looked at things all on one side, and shutting the eyes to the other."

Newman then proceeds to inquire how it is that in an age of enlightenment "the old family picture of the Man and the Lion keeps its place, though all the rest of John Bull's furniture has been condemned and has been replaced." And he answers, first of all, that a Giant whose name is Tradition is largely to blame. For three hundred years the tradition in England has been Protestant, the tradition of Parliament and the law courts, of literature and society, of the nursery and the school-room, of the pulpit and the newspaper—no wonder that the great majority of the English people have a false and distorted view of the Catholic Church. He points out that the legitimate instruments for determining the truth of a religion are two, namely, fact and reason, or the way of history and the way of

*The Giant Whose  
Name is Tradition*

science. So strong, however, is the influence of tradition that Englishmen, despite all the noise they make about fair-play, use neither the one nor the other when it is a question of settling the claims of the Catholic Church. Instead of judging for themselves, they take for granted what they receive on tradition.

Tradition is a Giant, but a Giant who is borne on the shoulders of a Bogy whose name is Fable. Trace any particu-

*The Bogy Whose  
Name Is Fable*

lar anti-Catholic tradition back to its source and it vanishes into thin air, for its basis is fable. Newman shows how a whole series of anti-Catholic historians repeated a base accusation against one of the early saints, each one taking the authority of the other for granted. Finally, the Protestant historian Maitland investigated the life and writings of the saint in question and he found the accusation which had been handed down by one historian after another to be nothing more than a fable made out of whole cloth by the writer Mosheim. We are all familiar in our own day with the persistent charge made against the Jesuits. About every six months somebody gravely informs the world that the Jesuits teach that the end justifies the means. This charge has never been proved, and it never can be proved, for it rests on fable; nevertheless, like Banquo's ghost, it will not down.

The great anti-Catholic tradition, originating as it does in fable, is kept alive and nourished by the Hobgoblins of Prejudice and Ignorance. Prejudice

*The Hobgoblins  
of Prejudice and  
Ignorance*

means a pre-judgment or a judgment by anticipation. People who all their lives have heard nothing but what is bad about Catholics, as is natural, entertain a bad opinion about them; and when a new accusation is made against Catholics, these people are disposed to credit it without weighing the evidence. In other words, prejudiced people make the anti-Catholic tradition practically infallible, because they place so much confidence in it that they refuse to hear what can be said on the other side. Hence, Newman

claims, prejudice is something more than a mere act of judgment; it is a habit or state of mind which disposes a person to hold opinions against reason. The father of prejudice is repetition, a truth which finds expression in the old maxim: "Fling dirt enough and some will stick." Prejudice is one great prop to the anti-Catholic tradition; ignorance is the other. "To know Catholics," declares Newman, "is the best refutation of what is said against them." The great anti-Catholic tradition lives on precisely because Catholics are surveyed from without, and not inspected from within. Ignorance is the fertile soil on which prejudice thrives. Outsiders define things Catholic much after the manner in which Dr. Johnson, in his famous dictionary, constructed some of his definitions. When asked by a certain lady why he had defined the word "pastern" as "the knee of a horse," he replied with engaging frankness: "Ignorance, Madam, pure ignorance."

Newman devotes the last chapter of his book to a consideration of the duties of English Catholics in the year 1851. It was a time of bitterness and persecution. What were Catholics to do about it? How were they to bear themselves in the face of the enemy? Newman, first of all, disclaims the intention of encouraging the laity to be controversial or forward or rash in disputing upon religion. "It is no easy accomplishment in a Catholic to know his religion so perfectly, as to be able to volunteer a defence of it." Nor would he have Catholics pay undue attention to the nasty bigots who go about the country making speeches and holding solemn meetings. The vulgarity, the fanaticism and the scurrility of these itinerant orators defeat the end they have in view, outrage public decency, and disgust fair-minded Protestants. To recognize them at all is to advertise them. An incident in the life of Newman illustrates his own method of handling them. When Mr. McNeile, the Liverpool anti-Popery speaker, appeared in Birmingham and challenged him to a public debate, Newman, who was an accomplished player on the violin, replied that he was quite ready for an encounter if Mr. McNeile would open the meet-

<i>Duties of Catholics</i>
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ing by making a speech, and he himself might respond with a tune on the violin. The public would then be able to judge which was the better man. It is needless to add that Mr. McNeile did not accept this interesting and novel proposal. In outlining the duties of Catholics, Newman takes his cue from the fact that the great anti-Catholic tradition has its roots mainly in ignorance. Non-Catholics are still looking at the "old pictures and old maps made years ago, which have come down to them from their fathers." The chief duty of Catholics, therefore, is to make themselves and their religion better known in the particular community in which they happen to live. Public opinion is strong, but local opinion is even stronger. A Catholic, if he is to do anything for the Church, must influence local opinion; he must influence the persons around him, the persons among whom he has lived all his life, the persons who know him. It is local opinion that counts in the long run, and hence Catholics must win the respect of the community in which they live; they must be public-spirited and disinterested; they must take a prominent part in charitable, civic and patriotic affairs; and, above all, they must cultivate the gift of making their religion known to others. But let Cardinal Newman speak for himself: "I want a laity, not arrogant, not rash in speech, not disputatious, but men who know their religion, who enter into it, who know just where they stand, who know what they hold, and what they do not, who know their creed so well, that they can give an account of it, who know so much of history that they can defend it. I want an intelligent, well-instructed laity."

## THE CREED OF A CHRISTIAN OPTIMIST

("Orthodoxy" by Gilbert K. Chesterton. Dodd, Mead and Company, New York.)

Gilbert K. Chesterton, the author of "Orthodoxy," is a complete refutation of the saying that nobody loves a fat man. The keen wit and high spirits of this mountain of a man are all the more remarkable when we remember the Shakespearean legend that leanness and learning are akin to each other. Chesterton has aroused the whole world to thoughtful laughter, and his critics are agreed that he is "the most likeable man in contemporary letters." Of mixed Scotch, French and English ancestry, he was born in London in 1874. Early in life he entered the field of journalism, and to-day he remains a journalist, the super-journalist of our age. His output as a writer has been simply tremendous. Editorials, reviews, essays, novels, poems, books of travel, histories and biographies have come from his pen in swift succession. Ever since 1908 Chesterton has been a champion of the Catholic viewpoint; in fact, so pronounced were his sympathies as revealed in his writings that everybody felt that his conversion was only a matter of time. In 1922 he entered the Church, a step which his brother Cecil, who died during the World War, had taken some years before.

When Chesterton is at his best, as he is in "Orthodoxy," he is a delightful author to read. He is a supreme master of paradox, and hence he is continually shocking his reader into attention. It is said of Edwin Booth that seeing him act in a Shakespearean play was like reading Shakespeare by flashes of lightning. The nimble play of Chesterton's scintillating wit produces the effect of reading by flashes of lightning. Chesterton himself defines paradox as the contrast or contradiction between a statement made and one's accepted beliefs. The chief

*A Master of  
Paradox*

value of a good paradox is that it forces us to examine our accepted beliefs. For instance, Chesterton notes that men in this material age have a rooted belief in the maxim, "There is nothing that succeeds like success," and by a slight change in the wording he coins the following paradox: "There is nothing that fails like success." A statement of this kind pulls us up short and compels our attention. When we analyze it we find that Chesterton is simply proclaiming an old truth or a bit of common sense in a new and startling way. In other words, Chesterton drives home necessary truths by means of paradox, a method of teaching which was employed by Christ Himself. Witness the greatest of all paradoxes: "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world keepeth it unto life eternal." It is Chesterton's mastery of paradox that has made him the most stimulating writer of our day and that has won for him the attention of the entire English-speaking world.

"Orthodoxy," which appeared in the year 1908, is Chesterton's masterpiece. It was written before he entered the

*"Orthodoxy" Gives  
Chesterton's Creed*

Church, and yet it is so thoroughly Catholic in tone and spirit that it is always listed among our ten best Catholic books. In 1905 Chesterton published a book entitled "Heretics," in which he attacked the materialists and the sceptics of our age. In "Heretics" Chesterton showed modern advanced thought to be something barren, negative, destructive, concerned merely "with the casting away of dogmas." Against the scepticism of modern heretics like H. G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw, he maintained that "if there be such a thing as mental growth, it must mean the growth into more and more definite convictions, into more and more dogmas. The human brain is a machine for coming to conclusions; if it cannot come to conclusions it is rusty." After the publication of "Heretics" Chesterton was challenged by one of his critics to give the world his own philosophy. The answer to that challenge was "Orthodoxy." The book, therefore, is a statement of his creed, his spiritual autobiography, a sort of "Apologia pro Vita Sua."

Chesterton tells us that he was a pagan at the age of twelve and a complete agnostic at the age of sixteen. As a young man he read agnostic authors like Huxley, Spencer and Ingersoll, and for a time he posed at being in advance of his age. But, paradoxical to say, it was his reading of these agnostic writers that led him back to Christianity. He studied their various attacks upon Christianity and found them mutually contradictory. It was as if an unknown man were described by many men. "Suppose we were puzzled that some men said he was too tall and some too short; some objected to his fatness, some lamented his leanness; some thought him too dark, and some too fair." In a case of this kind we would be justified in concluding that the unknown man was of the right shape, and that there was something wrong with his critics. The contradictions of the agnostics prove not the unfitness of Christianity but their own unfitness. Chesterton turned from his agnostic authors to the study of religion, and, in his own words, "I was startled to find that this key fitted the lock." He found Christianity to be sane, and the agnostics who contradict themselves and one another to be queer.

*Christianity  
and Its Critics*

In "Orthodoxy" Chesterton undertakes to show how he arrived at the conclusion that the Christian religion is the best root of energy and the only safe guardian of morality, liberty and progress. He begins his interesting adventure by preaching loyalty to life. Life is the greatest of gifts, for which we can never be sufficiently thankful to the Giver. "Children are grateful when Santa Claus puts in their stockings gifts of toys and sweets. Could I not be grateful to Santa Claus when he put in my stockings the gift of two miraculous legs?" The average man takes too much for granted. Because he lives in a palace of wonders all the time, he is prone to be bored. Behold, Chesterton commands him, how grotesque the world is, how magnificent, how incredibly beautiful. Ponder how strange it is to be alive and to eat through a hole in one's head and to parade about ridiculously on two pointed sticks. Man alone of

*Chesterton  
Preaches Optimism*

all animals can laugh. Life is a long surprise party. Be an optimist, therefore, and look up! Thus does Chesterton startle the average man into wonderment.

Nor will Chesterton allow his optimism to be chilled by the mechanical theories of materialistic science. It is true that man is an animal, but "the startling thing is not how like man is to brutes, but how unlike he is. That an ape has hands is far less interesting to the philosopher than the fact that having hands he does next to nothing with them." It is true that the ants have a wonderfully organized society, but "who ever found an ant-hill decorated with the statues of celebrated

*Theories of  
Materialistic  
Science*

ants?" Chesterton deems the materialistic theory of evolution a chain as strong as its missing link. He dismisses historians like Wells and Van Loon, who devote whole chapters to long, detailed descriptions of prehistoric man, in the following sentences: "Science knows nothing whatever about prehistoric man; for the excellent reason that he is prehistoric. There is no tradition of progress; but the whole human race has a tradition of the Fall." Nor will he allow his imagination to be bewildered by the vastness of the material universe opened up by scientific discovery. He ridicules the idea that the mere size of the cosmos should cause a man to lose his Faith; "for man was always small compared to the nearest tree." The materialistic scientist takes the joy, the wonder, the splendor out of life, for he makes of man nothing more than a machine, and Chesterton will have none of him. Materialistic science breeds agnosticism, scepticism, and pessimism, all of which mean the suicide of thought.

But Chesterton warns us that there is such a thing as false optimism, the optimism that whitewashes everything, the

*The False  
Optimism of  
Humanitarianism*

optimism that says: "My cosmos, right or wrong." Chesterton is keenly alive to the existence of moral evil, and hence he is opposed to the false optimism which is based on humanitarianism and scientific panaceas. He laughs at the notion that science, edu-



cation, eugenics, social service, and the like, can evolve a superman. Here we have a meaningless and unfounded optimism. He says: "Free-will is the real objection to that torrent of modern talk about treating crime as disease,—of healing sin by slow scientific methods. The fallacy of the whole thing is that evil is a matter of actual choice, whereas disease is not. A man may lie still and be cured of a malady. But he must not lie still if he wants to be cured of sin; on the contrary, he must get up and jump about violently."

True optimism starts with the proposition that the world does not explain itself. Behind the world there must be someone who runs it. Even the old fairy-tales of the nursery suppose some power over and above the world. Moreover, with the great primordial calamity of original sin, evil entered the world, and, as a consequence, man's happiness depends on the condition that he seek after the good and shun the evil. If we question

*True Optimism  
Based on  
Revealed Religion*

why God made life hang on a condition, the answer is why did He give us life at all. Life is a wonderful gift because it is the portal to Heaven, and no amount of moral evil in the world can obscure that fact. But this wonderful gift hangs on a condition, and hence the true optimist must be a hater of evil and a doer of good. Revealed Religion thus motivates true optimism, supplies the fixed ideal of reform, and fills the earth with gladness. Revealed Religion is the corner-stone of true optimism, because it explains the world, accounts for the existence of evil in the world, and makes such things as suffering and sacrifice happy and joyous. "The Christian optimism," declares Chesterton, "is based on the fact that we do not fit into the world." The Christian optimist is loyal to life and finds the world an attractive place, because he understands the meaning of existence. "One can find no message in a jungle of scepticism; but the man will find more and more meanings who walks through a forest of doctrine and design. Here everything has a story tied to its tail." The Christian optimist is not dismayed by the evil which he finds in the world, because he realizes that he was created for something higher, and hence that he does not fit into this world of evil. Unlike the sour

and gloomy Puritan, he fights evil with a light heart. He knows that he is in the wrong place, and his soul sings with joy, "like a bird in spring."

From this brief and necessarily inadequate summary of "Orthodoxy," it is obvious that Chesterton's optimism is

*The Significance  
of Chesterton's  
Conversion*

founded on the root doctrines of a Creator, the dependence of man, and original sin. He wrote his book to give reasons for his faith in the Apostles' Creed. In the introductory chapter he stated that he did not intend to discuss the "question of what is the present seat of authority for the proclamation of that Creed." But before he is through he makes it quite clear that there exists in the world a living teacher, whose voice speaking with authority compelled his assent to the doctrines of Revealed Religion. The authority of the living Church of Christ is the real reason for his Faith. "But," he adds, "if any one wants my opinions about the actual nature of the authority, Mr. G. S. Street, (the critic whose challenge originally led to the writing of "Orthodoxy"), has only to throw me another challenge, and I will write him another book." Chesterton never wrote the other book. It wasn't necessary. He clearly indicated to the whole world where the present seat of authority for the Apostles' Creed is to be found by entering the Catholic Church in 1922. And he tells us just what this crowning act of his life meant to him in the following lines taken from a poem, entitled "The Convert," which he wrote shortly after his reception:

"The sages have a hundred maps to give  
That trace their crawling cosmos like a tree,  
They rattle reason out through many a sieve  
That stores the sand and lets the gold go free:  
And all these things are less than dust to me  
Because my name is Lazarus and I live."

## THE PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

("Europe and the Faith" by Hilaire Belloc. The Paulist Press, New York.)

When Hilaire Belloc, in 1920, published his book, "Europe and the Faith," he filled a long-felt want, for he gave the world in brief, concise form the Catholic philosophy of history. The chapters in this book originally appeared in 1912 as a series of magazine articles published in *The Catholic World*. This date is important, for it helps to refute the contention of those who would fain dismiss the book with a contemptuous wave of the hand as anti-German war propaganda. The book was planned and written at least two years before the opening date of the World War, and it cannot by any stretch of the imagination be labelled war propaganda.

Hilaire Belloc has been a writer all his life, and of late years he has come to be recognized as the leading spokesman of that little band of lay Catholics who are fighting the battles of the Faith in England. Of Irish and French ancestry, he was born in France in 1870.

*Belloc a Fighter  
and a Logician*

He was educated in England at the Birmingham Oratory School, where he was under Cardinal Newman, and at Oxford University, where he distinguished himself by winning first-class honors in history. In 1903 he became a naturalized British subject, and for a number of years he was a member of Parliament. Belloc's Irish ancestry has made him a fighter. His books would fill several large library shelves, and yet there is not one in which he does not proclaim his Catholicity from the housetops. Like many of our best football coaches of to-day, he believes that the most effective defence is an offence, and hence in everyone of his serious books he boldly advances upon the enemy's entrenchments. But he is not only an aggressive champion of the Faith; he is also a logician, and we must credit his logic to the French strain in his blood. He generally begins a book by stating a thesis, and then he demonstrates this thesis step by step. His

main appeal is to the reason, and his strong point as a writer is logic. As a result he is neither rhetorical nor eloquent in his style; he has Huxley's horror of "plastering the fair face of truth with that pestilent cosmetic, rhetoric."

Readers of "Europe and the Faith" may be repelled by the stern logic of its unadorned style, but there is no denying the importance of the argument which Belloc sets forth. The book is the best refutation in brief form of the anti-Catholic version of history which has dominated the field for so many years.

*The Nordic  
Philosophy of  
History*

Who does not remember this anti-Catholic philosophy of history as presented even in our high school text-books? We were told that the Roman Empire, having become Christian and Catholic under Constantine, fell into vice and decay, and was at last invaded and destroyed by young and vigorous barbarian tribes from the North of Europe. These young, uncorrupted and naturally virtuous barbarians from the North, having destroyed the Roman Empire, were then supposed to have regenerated Europe, and to have given rise at the time of the Reformation to the Protestant and Nordic civilization of our day. Here in a nutshell is the Nordic theory of history which for the past thirty years has exalted the Protestant races of Northern Europe at the expense of their Catholic neighbors in the South. The people of Northern Europe have inherited from the blond, manly Nordics of the past what Dean Inge, a typical anti-Catholic historian, calls the "ethical ideal of the North." He tells us just what this ideal is: "The week day religion of 'the Goth' is an ideal of valor and honor, of truthfulness and fair-dealing." Such an ideal the Dean does not find among the Catholic peoples of Italy, France and Spain. But Dean Inge was anticipated by Tennyson who years ago compressed the Nordic theory of history into three lines of poetry:

"O, tell her, Swallow, thou that knowest each  
That bright and fierce and fickle is the South,  
And dark and true and tender is the North."

For years, therefore, the children in the schools have been taught that all that is best and noblest and truest in our civili-

zation derives from the purely natural virtues of pagan tribes from the North of Europe.

Now, Hilaire Belloc wrote "Europe and the Faith" to answer the question: Is our civilization from the Baltic or from the Mediterranean?—from the pagan tribes of the North of Europe or from the cultured and Christian peoples of the South? And he summarizes his answer in the following words:

*Modern Civilization Comes from the Mediterranean*

"My object in writing this study is to show that the Roman Empire never perished but was transformed; that the Catholic Church which, in its maturity, it accepted, caused it to survive, and was in that origin of Europe, and has since remained, the soul of one Western civilization." He then proceeds to show by evidence that the whole anti-Catholic or Nordic theory of history is a fairy-tale without any documentary basis whatever. The Roman Empire was not destroyed, but converted and preserved by the Catholic Church. Barbarian tribes from the North, it is true, invaded the Roman Empire, but, instead of destroying the Roman Empire, they were absorbed by it, becoming both civilized and Christianized. Belloc thus shows that inside the Roman Empire, with which the Catholic Church was co-extensive, was civilization; outside this ring were the outlying tribes of Northern barbarians, some of which were not converted to the Faith until as late as the twelfth century. Here Belloc is only repeating a philosophy of history which Cardinal Newman stamped with his approval, when some seventy years ago, in defining the term "civilization," he wrote: "The countries which surround the Mediterranean Sea as a whole have been from time immemorial the seat of an association of intellect and mind, such as deserve to be called the Intellect and Mind of Human Kind. . . . The same *orbis terrarum*, which has been the seat of Civilization, will be found to be the seat of Christianity." In a word, our culture comes from Greece and our religion from Palestine, and both have been transmitted to us through the medium of Rome.

Hence, the finest things in our civilization come, not from the North, but from the Mediterranean, and these things were

handed down to us by the Catholic Church. The unity of Catholic Europe was broken in the sixteenth century by the Reformation, which essentially was a rebellion against the Faith on the part of those Northern barbarian nations which were the last to be civilized and Christianized. And the Reformation would probably have ended in failure, had it not

*Catholic Church  
is the  
Soul of Europe*

been for the defection of England, the only one of the old Roman provinces to go over to the side of the Reformers. The defection of England made a gap in the ancient ring of Catholic civilization, a gap which has not been closed. But, against the loss of England to the Faith, Belloc balances the loyalty of Ireland. "For the Irish race alone of all Europe has maintained a perfect integrity and has kept serene, without internal reactions and without their consequent disturbances, the soul of Europe which is the Catholic Church." And if the soul of Europe is the Catholic Church, the ancient ring of Catholic civilization must be re-established. "Europe must return to the Faith, or she will perish."

The Nordic historians are fond of telling us that both the people of England and the descendants of the early colonists

*The Anglo-  
Saxon Race*

in America belong to the Anglo-Saxon race and have a common speech which derives from the Teutonic family of languages. Belloc has an interesting chapter on this point, entitled "What Happened in Britain?" He points out that the island which we now call England was originally inhabited by Celts, that these Celts were civilized and Christianized by the Romans, and that for a period of four hundred years Britain was a flourishing Roman colony. The Anglo-Saxon tribes from the Baltic invaded Britain in the year 449, and the Nordic historians explain that these savage tribes blotted out both the Celts and the Romans.

This explanation is too easy—it doesn't explain. Belloc shows that there isn't a scrap of historical evidence to prove

that the Anglo-Saxon invaders exterminated the Celtic and Roman inhabitants. But the Anglo-Saxon pirates did settle along the eastern sea-coast, and thus they broke the bond of union between the Catholic Church in Britain and its center of unity in Rome. The Anglo-Saxon cut the communications between Britain and civilization on the Continent, and these communications remained broken for one hundred and fifty years. When, in 597, St. Augustine and his missionaries from Rome landed in Kent, Christianity had to make an entirely new start in Britain, and St. Augustine began by converting the pagan Anglo-Saxon tribes scattered along the eastern sea-coast. Here we have the explanation for the Anglo-Saxon element in our language. The Catholic Church backed the language of their new converts, and the spread of Anglo-Saxon speech accompanied the spread of Christianity westward across the island. Hence, Belloc holds that you can't dispose of the early Celtic and Roman population of Britain with a mere wave of the hand, in order to make room for the noble Nordics. Later on, the Danes in great numbers invaded the island, and, in 1066, the Normans, who were chivalrous sons of the Church and cultured Frenchmen, won the decisive battle of Hastings and became the rulers of England. The earliest records thus show that the English, far from being of purely Anglo-Saxon stock, are a mixed race, a fusion of Celtic, Roman, Saxon, Danish, and Norman-French strains.

*What Happened  
in Britain*

Nor is language, as Thomas Huxley long ago pointed out, a test of race. "If it is," declares Professor Ford of Princeton University, "then the negro who said that 'we Anglo-Saxons will win the war,' was right in the racial claim he made for himself." If language is a test of race, then the Irish, who no longer speak their native Gaelic, are Anglo-Saxons, that is, if we allow the Nordic assumption in regard to the English language. But Anglo-Saxon and English are not synonymous. We must remember that just as the English race is a

*Language No  
Test of Race*

mixed race, so the English language is a mixed language. During the course of centuries whole multitudes of Latin, French and Greek words have come into our daily speech. The Latin element in our language is so large that philologists tell us that we are justified in asserting that the proper term to describe the language is Latin-English. The proportion of Latin words to Anglo-Saxon words stands about 48 to 29. Hence, when we hear noble Nordics insisting on the use of the short, simple, sturdy Anglo-Saxon words, we should recall the famous dictum: "Avoid Latin derivatives; use terse, pure, simple Saxon," every word of which is Latin except "Saxon."

The Anglo-Saxon myth has been exploded, but, as someone has said, the news of its bursting will be slow in reaching the members of the Ku Klux Klan, and it will take even longer before the impression made upon our popular text-book histories will be wiped out. Belloc's book, "Europe and the Faith," has been largely instrumental in calling attention to the flimsy foundation upon which the Anglo-Saxon myth was reared. It has been on the market for some eight years, and yet it is not as widely read by Catholics as it deserves to be. In an age when such un-Christian and unhistorical works as Wells' "Outline of History" and Van Loon's "The Story of Mankind" are palmed off by the hundreds of thousands upon the unsuspecting public as genuine history, Belloc's little book stands like an oasis in a desert.



**FATHER DAMIEN'S DEFENDER**

("Father Damien: An Open Letter to the Reverend Dr. Hyde of Honolulu from Robert Louis Stevenson."  
Charles Scribner's Sons, New York and Chicago.)

In 1922 Dr. Henry van Dyke, of Princeton University, published a volume entitled "Companionable Books," in which he devotes a chapter to Robert Louis Stevenson. In the preface Dr. van Dyke tells us that he intends to deal with books which interpret life and nature, and with authors who have put the best of themselves into their work. He then adds: "Such criticism as the volume contains is therefore mainly in the form of appreciation with reasons for it. The other kind of criticism you will find chiefly in the omissions." Now, in his chapter on Stevenson, Dr. van Dyke omits all mention of the famous "Open Letter" which Stevenson addressed to the Reverend Dr. Hyde of Honolulu. Evidently the "Open Letter" was subjected by Dr. van Dyke to "the other kind of criticism," the criticism not of appreciation but of disapproval, the criticism which the reader is to discover "chiefly in the omissions." And yet if ever there was a work into which an author put the best of himself, that work is Stevenson's "Open Letter." It is strange that so fine a critic as Dr. van Dyke should pass it over in silence. Whatever reason we may assign for Dr. van Dyke's lack of appreciation of the "Open Letter," it is certain that Catholics will never willingly allow it to die. The "Open Letter" can be read in twenty minutes, and yet it is the most beautiful, moving and spontaneous tribute ever paid to the missionary-martyr of the lepers.

The significance of this little book cannot be grasped unless we know something of the man who penned it, and of the immediate circumstances which led to its composition. Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh in 1850, and he died in 1894 in Samoa, where he lies buried. His mother was the daughter of a Presbyterian minister and his father held strong religious views. At an early age Stevenson determined to be-

*Stevenson's Visit  
to Molokai*

come a writer. He revived the essay of personal charm after the manner of Charles Lamb, and in an age of science and realism he resuscitated the novel of romantic adventure after the manner of Sir Walter Scott. The wholesome, optimistic tone of his writings as well as the graceful appeal of his style made him one of the most widely read authors in the closing years of the nineteenth century. Stevenson's precarious health necessitated his living in a mild climate, and he spent the later years of his life cruising among the islands of the Pacific, finally settling in Samoa. Stevenson's visit to the leper island Molokai, shortly after the death of Father Damien in 1888, made a deep and lasting impression upon him. Stevenson himself has left us an account of this visit. On the morning when he first caught sight of the leper settlement on Molokai—a town of wooden houses, cut off from the rest of the island by a great wall—the scene filled him with horror. The lepers who had been his fellow passengers were first sent ashore, and a second boat followed, carrying Stevenson and some Catholic nuns who had volunteered to minister to the lepers. Stevenson thus describes his feelings: "My horror of the horrible is about my weakest point, but the moral loveliness at my elbow blotted all else out; and when I found that one of them was crying, poor soul, quietly under her veil, I cried a little myself; then I felt as right as a trivet, only a little crushed to be there so uselessly." He spoke to the nuns, trying to cheer them: "Ladies, God Himself is here to give you welcome." And soon after, while still on the island of Molokai, he wrote these lines:

(To Mother Maryanne)

"To see the infinite pity of this place,  
The mangled limb, the devastated face,  
The innocent sufferer smiling at the rod—  
A fool was tempted to deny his God.  
He sees, he shrinks. But if he gaze again,  
Lo, beauty springing from the breast of pain!  
He marks the Sisters on the mournful shores;  
And even a fool is silent and adores".

Nor was all this a mere passing impression. Nearly a year after his visit to Molokai, Stevenson was idly glancing over some old newspapers, among them the *Sydney Presby-*

terian of October 26, 1889, and his eye lighted on a letter from the Reverend Dr. Hyde, the resident Presbyterian minister of Honolulu. This contemptible letter, belittling the work of Father Damien and defaming his moral character, aroused in Stevenson a veritable storm of righteous anger. The outcome was the "Open Letter to the Reverend Dr. Hyde," the greatest "piece of bludgeoning" since the days of Newman's

*The Open Letter  
to Dr. Hyde*

"Apologia pro Vita Sua." Stevenson gave the "Open Letter" to the world on March 27, 1890, and although many editions of it were published before his death, he ever refused to accept any payment for it. On one occasion he wrote to a London publisher: "The letter to Dr. Hyde is yours, or any man's. I will never touch a penny of remuneration. I do not stick at murder; I draw the line at cannibalism. I could not eat a penny roll that piece of bludgeoning brought me." Stevenson's letter is full of the intensest feeling; here we have Stevenson, a plain, blunt man, speaking from his heart of the things which he knew from personal observation and experience. It is quite clear that the letter was written in a white heat of moral indignation; the sentences cut and stab; the irony blazes in a pitiless and deadly flame; the invective annihilates. Stevenson makes no attempt to conceal the little human defects of Father Damien, but he gives a complete refutation of the charge brought against Father Damien's moral character by the Reverend Dr. Hyde. He proves this charge to be the baseless fabrication of envy and prejudice. Dr. Hyde didn't know the location of Molokai on the map, and yet spurred on by malignant envy he rushed into a cowardly attack upon the memory of the saint and hero, who was the first to bring relief and spiritual consolation to the lepers, who lived and worked amongst them for fifteen years, and who, having, in the daily round of his duties, contracted leprosy himself, died a martyr to the cause on which he had focussed the attention of the whole world. Throughout the entire letter Stevenson employs the *argumentum ad hominem* with devastating effect. Dr. Hyde, to take a single instance, had referred to Father Damien as "a coarse, dirty man." "You make us sorry," replies Steven-

son, "for the lepers, who had only a coarse old peasant for their friend and Father. But you, who were so refined, why were you not there to cheer them with the light of culture?—Think of the poor lepers annoyed with this dirty comrade. But the clean Dr. Hyde was at his food in a fine house." Thus does Stevenson plunge his foil home "in the interest of all mankind and the cause of public decency in every quarter of the world."

Stevenson's tribute to Father Damien is the more sincere and significant, when we remember that Stevenson for the greater part of his life at least did not understand the ideals which motivated the heroism of the missionary-martyr of the lepers. The very latest Stevenson book, Steuart's biography, stresses

*Stevenson's Creed  
of the  
Active Life*

the facts of Stevenson's early years, how he was repelled by the stern Presbyterianism of his parents and how as a young man he led a wild Bohemian life. In his early days he reacted against Revealed Religion, a reaction which finds expression not only in a rather carefree life, but also in the creed which he preaches in his essays, his novels and his verse. Stevenson was not unaffected by the spiritual disturbances which marked the closing years of the nineteenth century. He was troubled by the materialism and blank pessimism of the age, and, like Theodore Roosevelt, he sought a refuge in the doctrine of the strenuous life. In his early essays, Stevenson teaches that we cannot know the meaning either of life or death. He argues that, even though we do not know anything about life or death, still we have some experience of "living," and hence that it is braver and more manly to live strenuously than to live like a coward. The Alpine climber excites our admiration but not the man who goes on a diet in the interests of his constitution. Stevenson thus has little use for asceticism and he ignores Revealed Religion almost entirely. The active life which he praises in his essays, he exemplifies in novels like "Treasure Island," "Kidnapped," "The Master of Ballantrae," and "St. Ives." His heroes are men of action, characters who are the embodiment of the joy of living and the strenuous life. His creed of the active life also explains much of his verse, notably

"Our Lady of the Snows," a poem in which he voices his disapproval of the Trappist monks who desert the world of action for a life of prayer and contemplation. Now, while Stevenson's philosophy of the active life makes for courage and optimism, still, as is evident, it is not a philosophy that satisfies the thinking man. Man wants to know the answers to the questions "Whence" and "Whither," and only Revealed Religion can motivate the active and joyous existence which Stevenson would have us lead. The truth is that Stevenson was not a deep thinker; he did not face the facts; he built up a philosophy of optimism on a foundation that will not stand.

Stevenson's visit to Molokai was his first real contact with Catholicism, and there can be no question about the profound impression made upon him. He spent an entire week in the leper settlement, and when he saw "the butt-ends of human beings lying there almost unrecognizable," he jotted down in his diary the words "a grinding experience," and when the boat bore him away from Molokai, he kept on repeating the lines of the song:

*Stevenson's  
Contact With  
Catholicism*

"'Tis the most distressful country  
That ever yet was seen".

When we read Stevenson's own description of his experiences among the lepers, it is impossible to escape the conclusion that for once at least his creed of the active life failed him. No doubt he realized the hollow mockery of trying to console the lepers with a philosophy whose main stress is on the joy of living. Certainly his contact with the work of Father Damien and the Catholic nuns awakened in him a new respect for priests and sisters. He speaks with unbounded enthusiasm of the "moral loveliness" of the Catholic nuns, and Father Damien was to him to the very end of his life "that saint, that martyr." His chance contact with Catholicism, it would seem, deepened his moral nature. At all events, his "Open Letter to Dr. Hyde" is unique among his writings; it possesses a depth, a humility and a fervor, which are not to be found in anything else he wrote. It is a spontaneous and beautiful tribute to the angels from a man whose life and outlook were bounded by the activities and joys of this world.

